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SUBJECT: G99 DESCRIBES STRATEGY FOR 2009 ELECTION

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE TREAT ACCORDINGLY

1. (SBU) Summary: In a December 5 meeting with the political section head, Erion Veliaj, leader of the G99 political movement, told the section head that he believed his G99 party would pick up three parliamentary seats in the upcoming election. G99 will be running a campaign focused on "public safety" as its primary theme with young, urban population. Veliaj also explained that he believed G99's best prospect for picking up seats in Parliament will be in Tirana's district, but he also hopes for success in Durrës. Based on a recent poll conducted by DP he believes that G99 will win three seats in the Tirana district. He explained that his party is too small to focus on too many issues, so G99 is leading a campaign with "public safety" as the central theme.

Veliaj on G99 in the June 2009 Elections

2. (SBU) In a December 5 meeting with the political section head, Erion Veliaj, leader of the G99 political movement, discussed his and other parties' prospects in the coming election in June 2009. Due to a mandate in the election code that parties must run in a minimum number of districts, G99 will be on the ballot in 8 of the 12 districts in this election. G99 will be focusing its efforts on only a few of these areas. Veliaj believes G99's best prospect for picking up seats in Parliament will be in Tirana's district, but he also hopes for success in Durrës. Based on a recent poll conducted by DP he believes that G99 will win three seats in the Tirana district. He explained that his party is too small to focus on too many issues, so G99 is leading a campaign with "public safety" as the central theme.

Veliaj on Metas LSI vs SP in the June 2009 Elections

3. (SBU) Veliaj also touched on the prospects of other parties in the meeting, specifically SP in relation to Meta's LSI party. Veliaj believes that Meta is hoping to undermine SP's chance at success in this election. In Veliaj's view, Meta would then be able to use SP's poor results as a way to push himself into a more prominent position representing the liberal portion of Albania's electorate.

COMMENT

4. (SBU) Although Veliaj and his G99 party are running for the first time in this election, the likelihood of their winning at least one seat in parliament seems promising. While Veliaj is a new and relatively small player in Albanian politics at the moment, his connections to Edi Rama of SP and his success with the NGO Mjaft! bode well for his chances to rise to a more prominent position. If Veliaj is right about Meta's motives in this election, this is further evidence that Meta is willing to take drastic political measures to advance his LSI party.

WITHERS